309 Comics Responses: expectations, assessment, nuts & bolts

For ENG309 you will be asked to compose 4 "comics responses" (and a warm-up exercise) over the course of the semester. The aims of this assignment are to try on the narrative techniques employed by the authors we'll read in common and to gain experiential knowledge of how comics are constructed as a multimodal grammar. The due dates of these assignments are on the syllabus and our expectation is that you will have posted your corresponding comic on the course website no later than midnight of the day it is due. **Course policies for work turned in late apply equally to comics responses as they do to your other written work;** please don't defer posting your work until the very last minute without allowing yourself some time to negotiate the technology (also consider the hours of operation at the New Media Center). You will be assessed for this assignment on the care, thoughtfulness, intellectual content, and attention to detail evidenced in your comics. On each comic, grades of "✓+"//"✓"//"✓-" will be given out by your preceptor, which equate to A-level//B-or-C-level//D-or-F-level work. I'll frequently draw upon these experiments in our larger classes as a reference point for our discussions and you will have the opportunity, should you choose, at semester's end to write a brief cover letter contextualizing your work and reflecting back on your experimental portfolio as a whole. Here's the entire list:

Getting Started: Memes, due Sept. 14th

Tell your reader a little bit about yourself through the "what I really do" meme as a way to both introduce yourself to your precept and practice posting your finished comics to the course website.

Comics Response #1: Book Review, due Sept. 21st
Discuss two selections from *McSweeney's #13* alongside one another and make an argument for what qualities they share and why they do or don't merit inclusion in an anthology of comics.

Comics Response #2: Memoir, due Oct 12th
Narrate a story from your own life experience. This can be anything from the exceptional to the quotidian, comic to tragic, but it needs to have a narrative arc: a beginning, a middle, and an end.

Comics Response #3: Adaptation, due November 16th
Transform a text in any other form or medium into comics.

Comics Response #4: Argument, due Dec. 7th
Convey the working thesis of what you plan to discuss in your final paper visually.

These instructions are left purposefully broad in order to embolden you to follow whatever directions you are most passionate about. I encourage you to limit yourself to a single page when you design your own comics—we're much more interested in quality rather than quantity, and you may be surprised by the amount of time a well rendered page of comics can take. Examples of successful assignments in past classes will be included as a PDF under the resources tab of the course Blackboard page and will be posted periodically to the course website.

How to create a comic of your own and post it to the course website

You are welcome to use whatever tools and techniques you discover to complete your comics for this course. I have made five copies of the program Comic Life 3 available for your use in the New Media Center, which is located in Lewis Library (look for the signs up on the appropriate machines). Comic Life is a fun and intuitive way for neophytes to create their own comics, and I encourage you to explore how it works: a tutorial on CL3 can be found here: http://plasq.com/manuals/comiclife/3.0/comiclife-3.0-gettingstarted.pdf (pro tip: save your work as you go). If you decide to work by hand or with other media, you'll want to scan your work as a JPEG file to upload it successfully to the course website. You don't need artistic talent to compose compelling comics; three of my favorite webcomics—catandgirl.com, xkcd.com, and qwantz.com—are not models of draftsmanship. Here are the basic steps:

1. Go to the course website: https://blogs.princeton.edu/americancomics/
2. Click the "login" link (upper right) and enter your PUID.
3. In the Dashboard, scroll over "Posts" (lefthand bar) and click on "New Post."
4. Enter your title, click "Add Media," then the "Upload Files" tab, and select the JPEG file for your comic. Click "Insert Into Post" (lower right). You may need to adjust the size of your image if it is a large file, which you can do above the

"Insert Into Post" button or by clicking the image and clicking the black pencil icon (upper left).

5. **Click on the appropriate category (bottom right) and tag the post with your name (bottom right, you may need to scroll down a bit) and whatever other tags your preceptor requests. This is crucial because it helps your preceptor find and sort your images easily.**

6. Click the "Publish" button (upper right).

7. Return to the home page to see if you like the way your post looks (a preview button also exists for this purpose), and if not, go back and edit it accordingly. While you're there, take a look at what everyone else is posting as well.
   If you have any questions, as always, don't hesitate to ask in class or in office hours.

A more detailed introduction to Wordpress can be found here:
https://blogs.princeton.edu/blog/2014/01/princeton-wordpress-quickstart-guide/ **Please bear in mind that this is a public webpage that is viewable by anyone with an internet connection.** If you have concerns about privacy, feel free to use an alias for the course, but please tell your preceptor what alias you plan to use and be consistent about its use. If you run into difficulties, reach out to the resources available to you (New Media Center, helpdesk, all those raised hands in the first class when I asked who has used Wordpress before) or email blogs@princeton.edu, and I hope the exercise proves to be both engaging and enjoyable. We look forward to reading and responding to your work.

Happy creating, db